Read Dec. 1
Mr. Mackay just returned to this country - C. H. M.

Africa

Evangasimba, Comoro, Aug: 20, 1854

Dear Bro. Pratt

Some months ago I received a letter from you to which I designed to make a reply that would reach you as early as the commencement of the present Seminary Session. Your letter was lost in the destructive fire with which we were visited in April last, so that I cannot now reply to any inquiries it may have contained and moreover since I am expecting soon to visit the U. States and will be, probably, in Princeton Some after you receive this letter, You will therefore excuse me from writing to you at length for the present. Bro: McQueen has just written a letter to another Society, in answer to certain inquiries made I have read over the letter and with his permission copy it here for the Society of Inquiry in Princeton Sem: Leaving off the introductory part I send you the answers to the inquiries referred to. They contain reliable information in regard to this field and the Missionary work here.

"What is the length of time requisite to acquire a ready use of the Language?

"I cannot give a direct answer to this question, for in the first place the circumstances providential and ordinary have been such as to prevent a fair experiment. Now this is I cannot now stop to explain, nor is it of special importance that I should but I suppose from 18 months to 2 years would be sufficient time to acquire such a use of the Language as to serve the purpose of any ordinary conversation, and in some cases it might be sufficient to acquire such a ready use of the Language as to preach in it. At Zahara the Mpongwe Language, which is similar in structure to this, has been so far acquired as to preach in less time and probably ## some persons under equally favorable circumstances would do as well in the Benga. There is evidently a diversity of gifts, if one has a remarkable talent for acquiring Language he might perhaps talk with considerable accuracy and fluency in a year. One might be able to translate

and read a Berja sermon in a year, or less with ordinary application. You will remember that a white man will not be able to study as many hours in a day, hard study as in Amer; if he could he would be able to accomplish what is mentioned above in a shorter time.

The acquirement of the Language requires patient investigation, ability to distinguish sounds, attentive observation to ascertain the exact and common use of words and above all the idiom of the Language. The peculiar shades of meaning which distinguish one word from another is only to be learned in this way. Besides there must be an exercise of memory to retain what is learned from day to day, and I think there should be a fondness for any considerable impediment in speech, or in other words the power of a distinct utterance is necessary.

"What physical qualifications, &c. An unimpaired constitution a cheerful disposition (if this may be mentioned under this head.) Stoically indifferent rather than irritable and fretful, for the climate tends to awaken the latter and when it is already developed it would only aggravate it and under the worst circumstances to impair his usefulness. A person who is disposed to liver complaints would hardly be advised or even encouraged to any one acquainted with the climate to make the trial. Energy with caution and zeal with prudence are valuable. A talent for or skill in mechanical employments would be found very useful and convenient both as respects the individual himself and the people who have but little knowledge in such matters.

"The principal discouragements. I scarcely know how to answer this for there are many. I will however mention some of them without any particular effort at order or classification. The disinclination of the people to any effort whether of mind or body - a thoughtlessness and indifference at times quite astonishing - as a natural result there is an actual inability to think connectedly on any subject which requires close attention - There is seldom a disposition to make an attempt of this kind Hence unless everything is made very plain & simple like to children, they cannot understand it and as they do not generally feel sufficient interest in spiritual things to make an attempt. They often are to be classed with those who, "having ears hear not". This is a source of frequent discouragement when all has been made so plain that any Sabbath School child can understand they do not know what is meant. Another result of this inattention and want of interest is that what is understood is soon forgotten. So that the preacher often must feel that his words to them are as the sound of a tinkling brass, & then besides this inability there is the opposition of the natural heart, and of a heart deeply sunk in sin. Scarce a custom that has not something simple in it or connected with it, and to these they cling with a remarkable tenacity; if all christians would cling as firmly to the truth there would be less of defection and error creeping into the church.

There is another source of discouragement arising from their inordinate love of riches. To be rich there is the greatest thing of all in their minds, never satisfied living in constant longing after more. There, there is intemperance, one of the greatest obstacles is found in polygamy. The more wives a man has the greater man he is. His wives & slaves are a living index of his riches. To give up this custom will require time and much more of attachment to principle than I have yet seen. The evils resulting from polygamy are many and troublesome and discouraging, never have I felt as since my arrival here. The force of the passage in the Romans where Paul says, because men do not desire to retain the Knowledge of God. He gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient. To read that passage in a Christian land is quite different from reading it in a heathen land where you can see as well as read. And understand what you read & what you see & hear. Oh my dear brethren it is a very dreadful thing indeed to be given over of God to a reprobate mind, to choose and walk in our own ways. May we never experience it.

What encouragements. There are to be found in the favour we have with the people, the desire they express and have manifested that we should stay among them, the desire to have their children taught & us. Many of them say we are too old to change our customs &c, but we want our children to learn all you teach and they can begin to do them, have an wife & do all you tell them - the general improvement of the people - the apparent yielding of some of their long established customs, - the attendance at church and some will of the most influential men; the interest which we have seen take in the truth as it concerns their own salvation. I believe most if not all the men and boys in the mission town pray morning and evening and some of them ask a blessing at their meals. and a few who can read in the bible and daily - and above all the promises of God, which cannot fail.

As to mental qualifications natural & acquired. Ignorance is never a recommendation, yet learning, great literary acquirements beyond what is usually obtained & a faithful student in a full Collegiate and Seminary course is not essentially important. though the more the better, Still on this field there are no learned nations to cavil with, or to converse with on literary subjects. The most learned (it is said) are not always the best teachers. But good "Common Sense" is very important, also an ability to make clear statements and illustrations such as the most simple and unthoughtful can understand (for the people do not think much except about their trade or daily employments and even in these they seem not to exercise much thought). of course clear views must precede clear statements. None a missionary should have a thorough knowledge of theology. "Knowledge & aptness to teach". Technical terms, indefinite phrases, Scholastic distinctions would perhaps be as satisfactory to some of the people as anything else; but they would not be as instructive & profitable. It is comparatively easy to preach the truth to the people but it is not an easy thing to make that truth so plain as to be understood & them.

There is not on this field a special need for controversial powers as

the people seldom contradict. We would often be glad if they would but there is too much indifference for that and too little to be lost by giving up their customs. There are no paid priests here to oppose themselves and no costly shrines to be made, and hence no "craftsmen" to arouse a prejudice, nor stir up the people. There is nothing here but custom. What is needed is to preach the truth with clearness and be able to give an answer should a question be propounded, this with the blessing of God will accomplish all.

But what should be always and distinctly before the mind as of first and indispensable importance is **personal piety**. One who is to spend his life among christian society among the heathen will need all the helps of piety i.e. all the attainments he has made in the divine life, all the growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ which he may possess to sustain him & keep him from going back. He will need it both for his own comfort and for the good of the people among whom he is to live. He is expected to afford in his own life an example of that which he is daily recommending, and the opinions of the people will be formed in no small degree from his manner of life. "Ye are the light of the world." But if that light is put under a bushel how shall it benefit others? If it shine but dimly & flicker will it not be esteemed of little worth, or probably an illusion? Let none put off this part of the preparation until he arrive on the field — If he comes with little love for souls, little zeal for the glory of Christ expecting to attain to these gracious states of christian experience on the field, he will in all probability be sadly disappointed. Of all the qualifications necessary, the moral should never be lost sight of. But should be attended to with the greatest anxiety, sought after striven for with unwearying perseverance — All the graces will of course be as necessary here as elsewhere; but if I were to particularize I would mention especially Faith, not presumption, patience, not want of energy, Zeal, according to Knowledge not fanatical & wild, & aptness to teach. The piety needed is emphatically such as is the result of the operations of the holy Spirit on the heart. A piety in which feeling is directed & judgment, and impulse yields to principle, and the satisfaction of pleasing God and enjoying Communion with him together with the blessed hope of glory shall be accounted as all that is to be regarded as the present reward — With such a piety in possession there need be no fear of a sorrowful & gloomy life. Let us then seek it in the appointed ways.

Bro: McQueen wishes me to acknowledge for him the receipt of a letter from the Society.

The Canton Mission send you christian greetings, and may the God of all grace direct you in all things.

Very Sincerely &c James L. Mackey